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THE QUICKSAND OF AFGHANISTAN: THE IMPACT OF THE AFGHANISTAN WAR ON THE BREAKUP OF THE SOVIET UNION

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Summary

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 came as a surprise not only for the politicians of the era, but for scholars of international relations as well. Since then, the reasons for this sudden and unanticipated breakup have been discussed at length and numerous studies have been introduced that aimed at explaining the causes that led to the collapse of the Soviet system. Some of these studies considered the reformist leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev as the major cause for the collapse, whereas others tried to explain the dissolution of the Soviet Union mainly with economic and social factors. This study focuses on the Afghanistan war as the key factor that started the chain of events that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union. The paper argues that the war in Afghanistan, albeit not being the sole reason of the collapse, accelerated the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union through the political, economic, military, and social consequences that it created. The war had a deep impact on Soviet politics in many ways. First, by demonstrating the weaknesses of the Red Army, it helped the new Soviet leadership to understand the reality that military methods for solving internal or international problems were no longer sustainable. Second, the war demonstrated that the Red Army was not unbeatable, which increased the appetite for independence on the part of the non-Russian republics. Third, the perception that non-Russians were forced to fight against Afghans in a “Russian war” raised suspicions about the “legitimacy” of the war, which created fragmentations in the multi-ethnic Red Army. Finally, the Afghanistan war created a mass of war veterans (*Afgantsy*) that unified under newly emerged non-party organizations. The increasing criticisms of these groups started to be seen in Soviet politics at an ever-growing pace, which weakened the political hegemony of the Communist Party and provided the first spark for *glasnost*.

Key Words: Muscovite Russia, Afghanistan War, Communist Party, Glasnost, Perestroika, Breakdown of the Soviet Union, Red Army, Central Planning, Brezhnev Doctrine, Reagan Doctrine, Anti-Soviet Resistance, Mujahedeen, Afgantsy, Iron Curtain, Saur Revolution, Jihad, Sovietization, Geneva Accords.

Introduction

The breakdown of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War is perhaps the most important political event of the 20th century. The collapse of the Soviet Empire is often explained with economic reasons such as the insufficiencies of the system of central planning, the increasing economic gap with the Western world due to the huge burden of shouldering the inefficient economies of the countries of the Iron Curtain, trade imbalances, insufficient productivity, and large-scale military expenditures because of the armament race.^[1] Some scholars, on the other hand, have attempted to explain the breakdown with domestic problems such as the extreme centralist political structure and the difficulty of sustaining the multi-ethnic Soviet Union under the increasing pressures of freedom and demands of self-determination.^[2] Some studies try to explain the disintegration process from the perspective of a leadership-based approach, particularly emphasizing the role of Mikhail Gorbachev as the Secretary General of the Communist Party.^[3]

It is an undeniable fact that economic insufficiencies, social and domestic problems, and the radical decisions introduced during the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev all played important roles in the disintegration process of the Soviet Union. Yet systemic and leadership-based explanations are not able to answer two sets of key questions asked by Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash. First, why did the physical breakup begin towards the end of the 1980s and why did the Soviet Union finally collapse in 1991? Why in the mid-1980s did Soviet leaders acknowledge the impossibility of sustaining their economic and foreign policies? Though the Soviet economy had deteriorated in the 1980s, it was not on the verge of an immediate breakdown. Moreover, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviets were, for the first time, on military parity with the United States. Second, why did the Soviet leaders tolerate the non-Russian secessionist movements? Why did they not employ the Soviet Army to suppress these movements as they had done in Czechoslovakia (1968), Hungary (1956), and East Germany (1953)?^[4]

Most of the previous studies that tried to explain the reasons for the disintegration of the Soviet Empire have considered the Afghanistan war to have a minor impact on the Soviet state system. However, this study argues that the war in Afghanistan, together with economic, social, and leadership-based factors, played a key role in the collapse of the Soviet Union by bringing to light the military and economic insufficiencies of the Soviet system, which had been “swept under the carpet” until then. As Charles Tilly has rightly pointed out, the costly war in Afghanistan has been the closest equivalent to earlier empire-ending wars.^[5]

According to Reuveny and Prakash, the repeated failures in this war changed the Soviet leadership’s perception of the efficacy of using force to keep non-Soviet nationalities within the Union (*perception effects*), devastated the morale and legitimacy of the army (*military effects*), disrupted domestic cohesion (*legitimacy effects*), and accelerated *glasnost* (*glasnost effects*). These effects operated synergistically. War failures weakened the military and conservative anti-reform forces and accelerated *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Importantly, these failures demonstrated that the Soviet army was not invincible, thereby encouraging non-Russian republics to push for independence with little fear of military backlash.^[6]

For a better understanding of the dynamics of the disintegration process of the Soviet Union, it would be appropriate to briefly examine the literature that attempts to explain the reasons that led to the collapse. In the second part, this study will try to summarize the chain of historical events that ended with the military interference of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In the third section, the article will try to explain the reasons for the defeat of the Red Army and its withdrawal from Afghanistan. In the fourth part, the study outlines the impact of the Afghanistan war on the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Finally, the conclusions reached are presented in the last part of this article.

Frequently Encountered Explanations of the Soviet Union's Breakdown

A) Structural Problems

According to Valeri Bunce, “the collapse of communism was both abrupt and long in the making”.^[7] The central planning system, which was able to transform a predominantly peasant agricultural economy into an industrial state in the 1920s and 1930s, proved to be unreliable and inefficient in the 1970s. The planning system, not designed for a complex modern economy, was far from answering the ever-increasing demand for consumer goods. The expectations of the citizens to have more and better goods were increasing, whereas the ability of the Soviet economy to supply the demanded products were declining. The Soviet economic system was badly in need of reform. Timothy J. Colton argues that the claims of Khrushchev that the Soviet economy would surpass the GNP per capita of the United States within twenty years were far from reflecting reality as the Soviet GNP per capita was only about one-third that of the US.^[8] In the 1970s annual growth dipped to below 3% on average, but by 1985 it had declined further to 1.6%. This steady decline in growth rates was driven by declines in production outputs in previously stellar industries like coal and steel.^[9]

In capitalist societies, excluding external shocks, periods of economic slowdown are usually caused by monetary phenomena. This was not the case in the Soviet Union. Declining productivity was the problem, because planners were reluctant to modernize existing plants and place heavy emphasis on new construction; a policy that was supposed to increase output as much as possible led in the long run to declining capital productivity.^[10] This declining productivity increased the economic gap between the Soviet Union and the West. The ever-growing gap could only be narrowed with systemic reforms. Gorbachev's attempt of “shock therapy” on the Soviet economy ultimately spun out of control and led to the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

According to Lauritzen, the Soviet Union, by setting arbitrary prices on the products circulating in the economy, hoped to be able to micromanage all factors of production. However, micromanagement was a very bad strategy that led to inefficiency. Having to deal with multiple macroeconomic problems was challenging, and the managers were largely responsible for running well-functioning and efficient firms or plants. Many of the techniques for increasing efficiency had a counter-effect contributing to losses. Managers of firms often altered the production assortment, allowed the quality of products to deteriorate, falsified records, over-ordered supplies and capital equipment, and resisted technological innovation.^[11] The problem of low investment rates was doubled by the problem of aging capital stock.

Absenteeism was also a growing problem. It had grown so rampant that it was deemed worthy of note in the 1985 Party Congress by Gorbachev himself.^[12] The time spent in long lines attempting to purchase scarce goods was another inefficiency created by a faltering planning system and that also helped to drive absenteeism.^[13]

The immense burden of military expenditures, which rose dramatically during the Cold War (1945–1991), dampened investments and reduced growth. This prevented the Soviet Union from allocating more funds to welfare programs. The giant size of the Soviet Union necessitated a large army, which was an immense burden on the budget. The subsidies provided by the Soviet Union to support the economies of the Eastern European countries in order to prevent unrest there and the financial support provided to other communist countries or groups increased the pressure on the Soviet economy every passing year.

B) Ideological Problems

Stoner-Weiss and McFaul argue that the power of ideology also waned in the declining years of the Soviet system. The Communist Party itself had become a bloated bureaucracy by the mid-1980s. The fallacy of the constitutional position of the Party as the “leading and guiding force of Soviet life, the nucleus of its political system, of all state organs and public organs”, was increasingly in question by the time Gorbachev acceded to power as the last Secretary General in 1985. Indeed, his plan under perestroika was to reconstruct the party and the Soviet political system around it.^[14]

Nikita Khrushchev was the first Secretary General who tried to reform the party and the Soviet system in an attempt to sweep away the negative legacy of the terror regime of Stalin. However, the modernization process was cut short following the rise of Brezhnev into power. During Brezhnev’s long reign the system first stagnated and then began to decline by the early 1970s. As Moshe Lewin has argued, the country went through a social revolution as Brezhnev slept.^[15]

With rapid rises in education levels came increased undermining of the ideology of high mobilization that the system required. The Soviet “social contract” – whereby the state provided cradle-to-grave services and guaranteed employment – was gradually failing. The adage among Soviet citizens, “we pretend to work, while you pretend to pay us”, gained increased currency through the 1970s. Increasingly, a chasm was opening between the promises that the regime made in its propagandist claims regarding the superiority of the socialist way of life and the regime’s growing inability to deliver on its outsized promises.^[16]

C) Demographic Problems

Negative demographic trends also fueled economic problems. Soviet population growth dropped about 50% between 1960 and 1980, causing a decline in the size of the work force and an increase in pensioners in need of state support. Death rates for both men and women were on the increase by the time Gorbachev came to power in the mid-1980s. In 1960, life expectancy for Soviet men was 67 years, but this had declined by 1980 to 62 years. The same trend was visible in the same period for women, whose life expectancy declined from 76 to 73 years. Certainly alcohol abuse and a lack of good healthcare fueled these problems. Overall standards of living were rapidly declining from the 1970s onward in comparison to OECD countries, especially in areas like housing (in chronic short supply) and education.^[17]

D) Problem of Nationalities

The Soviet Union was a multi-national empire from the revolution of 1917 through the final demise of Communism in 1991. While Russians always made up the largest single national group, they never formed an absolute majority of the population. All Soviet citizens had their nationality stamped in their passport, which provided one marker of identity. The everyday experiences of people throughout this period always involved dual identities that were both national and Soviet. The territory of the Soviet Union was divided into fifteen republics and more than one hundred autonomous regions, each of which was defined at least partially by nationality.^[18]

Despite the immense pressure of the Communist Party to suppress all sorts of nationalist

tendencies throughout the twentieth century, some nationalities were still able to develop a relatively strong sense of nationalism. Dissatisfied with the system imposed on them, these nationalities felt strong resentment towards the Soviet Union and desired autonomy and even independence. Being incorporated into the Soviet Union as a result of the 1939 pact with Nazi Germany, the three Baltic republics, namely Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, had the strongest sense of nationalism.

Other nationalities with a relatively strong sense of nationalism included the Ukrainians, Armenians, and Georgians. Examples of weaker definitions of nationalism included Belorussia, Moldavia, and especially the predominantly Muslim populations in Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan, where religious and cultural identities that transcended territorial boundaries coexisted with patterns of economic underdevelopment. Within each of these national republics, and especially within the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, smaller nationalities also developed stronger or weaker definitions of nationalism. While the end of the Soviet Union resulted in the formation of 15 independent republics, both the process of dissolution and the subsequent history of these countries were shaped by these differences in nationalism as a political ideology.^[19]

With the expectations of decentralization of power, freedom of expression, and the acknowledgment of the crimes of Soviet history, the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had been the most enthusiastic supporters of Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost*. By 1988, however, the demands of these republics went beyond what Gorbachev had in mind to include a Western-style market economy and multi-party political systems. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the Baltic republics also pioneered demands for independence. During the course of 1990, all three Baltic republics declared their independence from the Soviet Union.

In the Caucasus, Armenia's attempt to incorporate Nagorno-Karabakh into its territory escalated the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In January 1990, the Soviet troops intervened in Nagorno-Karabakh and established order. However, this move fueled the independence movements in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. In Georgia, the increased demands for independence led to an intervention by Soviet troops in April 1989 that resulted in 19 deaths. Ethnic minorities within Georgia also began to press for more rights or even new unions across existing political boundaries. Despite the suppressive attempts of the Soviet government, Georgia declared independence on 9 April 1991, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In Central Asia, a number of Communist officials from specific national groups redefined themselves and their networks of power in ways that positioned them to assume power as the Soviet system began to weaken. The post-Soviet rulers of the Central Asian republics thus shared a common trajectory, as they were all put into power by the Moscow-based Soviet Communist Party but remained in power as leaders of newly independent national republics.^[20]

In Ukraine, where nationalists could point to historical experiences of self-rule and cultural independence, the evolution of a nationalist identity was complicated. While the western regions of Ukraine were increasingly confrontational in their demands for autonomy and independence, the eastern regions, where a larger proportion of the population was ethnically Russian, were less supportive of this movement for autonomy and independence. Despite these divisions, the leaders of Ukraine and Belorussia declared independence in mid-December 1991, bringing the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to an end.^[21]

E) Leadership-Based Problems

Leadership-based explanations of the disintegration of the Soviet Union usually focus on the role of Gorbachev. According to Stoner-Weiss and McFaul, it is not unreasonable to ask whether the Soviet Union might have survived indefinitely, despite all of its problems, if not for the fateful

decisions of Mikhail Gorbachev. Although Gorbachev certainly cannot bare sole responsibility for the sudden collapse of the system, his economic and social reforms certainly contributed to the unanticipated collapse of the system.^[22]

By introducing his policies of economic reconstruction (*perestroika*) and openness (*glasnost*), Gorbachev attempted to revolutionize the already decaying economic, political, and social system. His economic reforms, which included the anti-alcohol campaign of 1985–1986, trade liberalization of 1986, Law on Enterprises of 1988, and Law on Cooperatives of 1988, were all well-intentioned steps. However, these new initiatives created unanticipated consequences. The law on the partial liberalization of trade encouraged favoritism and corruption in the process of the selection of enterprises that would be included in the program. The trade deficit could not be narrowed with the modest measures introduced by the new law.

The Law on Enterprises and the Law on Cooperatives, which intended to create private property, also created unexpected consequences. Gorbachev wanted to give enterprise managers control over contracts and introduce aspects of market economy. Private enterprise, to some certain extent, was also permitted. A small amount of private enterprise emerged, but managers started selling their products on the black market and the availability of goods in the market further declined. Gorbachev's reforms only had the effect of further deterioration of the already faltering system and accelerated the inevitable economic collapse.

In January 1987, Gorbachev introduced a new policy of “*demokratizatsiya*”, which proposed the holding of future Communist Party elections with multiple candidates who would be elected by secret ballot. Gorbachev also tried to expand the scope of *glasnost* for open discussion in the media. In February 1987, dozens of political prisoners were freed. Frequent demonstrations started to be seen in the streets of Moscow, something not possible before Gorbachev's term of office. In July 1987, Crimean Tatars staged a demonstration near the Kremlin Wall asking for the right to return to their homeland. In September 1987, Boris Yeltsin resigned from the Politburo, criticizing the slow pace of reform. This move marked the beginning of Yeltsin's rebranding as a rebel and his rise in popularity. The following four years of political struggle between Yeltsin and Gorbachev played a large role in the dissolution of the USSR.

The leadership-based explanations, as stated above, dwell on the roles of Gorbachev and, to some extent, Yeltsin in the process of the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, it is obvious that explaining the collapse of the Soviet Union only by the decisions of Gorbachev or Yeltsin would mean neglecting the chain of events that had already started the disintegration process before the accession to power of these leaders.

The Road to the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was no doubt a historical turning point in the Cold War. Being the largest Soviet military action since World War II, the invasion created immediate repercussions. The US responded to the invasion by providing support to the anti-Soviet resistance of the mujahedeen in line with the “Reagan Doctrine”. At that time, neither the Soviets nor the Americans could have imagined that the invasion was in fact the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union.

A) The Saur Revolution (1978–1979) and Its Aftermath

The invasion of Afghanistan was a culmination of a process whereby the USSR became increasingly and actively involved in Afghanistan's domestic affairs after the PDPA^[23] regime emerged in 1978 and failed to procure widespread support for their socialist reforms following the

Saur Revolution (27-28 April 1978).^[24] The so-called “Saur Revolution” was in fact a military coup carried out by leftist officers of the armed forces under the direction of the PDPA without any popular participation. Three days after the coup, the formation of a Revolutionary Council of the People’s Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) was publicly announced, with Nur Muhammad Taraki named as chairman, Babrak Karmal vice chairman, and Hafizullah Amin Minister of Foreign Affairs and a Deputy Chairman of Council of Ministers.^[25] The Soviet Union quickly recognized the DRA; however, the Soviet leaders were still cautious in engaging with Afghanistan.

According to Rasanayagam, the appointment of Amin, Karmal, and Aslam Watanjar as Deputy Chairmen of the Council of Ministers led to the establishment of three cabinets; the Khalqists were answerable to Amin, the Parchamites were answerable to Karmal, and the military officers (who were Parchamites) were answerable to Watanjar. In fact, the power structure in reality reflected the outlines of an incipient power struggle between Karmal and Amin, with the ineffectual and indecisive Taraki in the background as a figurehead.^[26]

The first conflict between the Khalqists and Parchamites arose when the Khalqists wanted to give PDPA Central Committee membership to the military officers who participated in the Saur Revolution. Amin, who had previously opposed the appointment of military officers to the PDPA leadership, switched sides; he now supported their elevation. The PDPA Politburo voted in favor of giving membership to the military officers; the victors (the Khalqists) portrayed the Parchamites as opportunists, implying that the Parchamites had ridden the revolutionary wave but had not actually participated in the revolution. To make matters worse for the Parchamites, the term “Parcham” was, according to Taraki, a word synonymous with factionalism.^[27]

On 27 June 1978, three months after the revolution, Amin managed to outmaneuver the Parchamites at a Central Committee meeting.^[28] The meeting decided that the Khalqists had exclusive rights to formulate and decide policy, which left the Parchamites impotent. Karmal was exiled, but was able to establish a network with the remaining Parchamites in the government. A coup to overthrow Amin was planned for September. Its leading members in Afghanistan were Qadir, the defense minister, and Army Chief of Staff General Shahpur Ahmedzai. The coup was planned for 4 September, on the Festival of Eid, because soldiers and officers would be off duty. The conspiracy failed when the Afghan ambassador to India told the Afghan leadership about the plan. A purge was initiated and Parchamite ambassadors were recalled, although few returned; for example, Karmal and Mohammad Najibullah both stayed in their assigned countries.^[29]

B) The Impact of the Herat Uprising

Taraki’s regime started taking immediate steps in order to transform Afghanistan into a modern socialist nation. However, the contrast between Marxist-Leninist ideology and the influence of cultural and religious traditions over Afghan society soon created a wave of reaction. Despite the recommendations of Alexander Puzanov, the Soviet Ambassador in Kabul, to ease the pace of reforms and preserve party unity between the rivaling Khalq and Parcham factions as a bulwark against rural opposition, the regime instead implemented land reforms and female literacy campaigns in early 1979.^[30]

The Afghan communists were deeply aware of the fact that they were a minority striving to bring about a revolution in a country with a small working class concentrated in Kabul and a few other cities, and an apathetic peasantry. They had gained power through a military coup and felt they had to strike swiftly and ruthlessly before a “counter-revolution” was able to organize itself. They tried to achieve this by three means: repression, made possible by the existence of a loyal and well-equipped army; agrarian reforms, which they thought would win the support of rural people;

and a mass literacy campaign to wean the people away from the influence of the clergy and spread communist ideology. The arbitrary manner in which this “revolution from above” was carried out in a rural society whose inner workings they were not aware of, or which they simply misunderstood or ignored, was a prime cause of the spate of spontaneous uprisings that took place before the Soviet invasion.^[31]

The opposition of the Afghan people to the socialist reforms increased gradually and culminated with the Herat uprising of 29 March 1979. The revolt turned into a war between the mujahedeen and the Afghan government. Despite the fact that the Herat uprising was crushed, it played a crucial role by increasing the concerns of the Soviets about the future of Afghanistan.

The impact of the Herat uprising was two-fold: it demonstrated the failures of the PDPA and constituted a breaking point confirming that neither Taraki nor Amin could control the deteriorating situation. Secondly, it marked a significant shift in Soviet policy toward Afghanistan. The Soviets, following the revolt, realized that the future of Afghanistan could no longer be left in the hands of the PDPA and that there was an increased need for Soviet intervention in the domestic affairs of Afghanistan to facilitate its stable socialist transformation. Following the Herat uprising, Moscow increased the number of Soviet advisors from 1000 in January to 5000 in August 1979, and started delivering large quantities of weapons.

C) Hafizullah Amin’s Rise to Power

The Soviets had long been suspicious of Amin due to his alleged connections with the CIA. An article appeared in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* in July 1979 that held Amin responsible for the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. By this “official declaration” Amin was now convinced that the Soviets did not wish to see him become the leader of Afghanistan. Instead of stepping back, Amin initiated a policy of extreme repression. In July 1979, Amin managed to replace the supporters of Taraki in the PDPA Politburo with pro-Amin PDPA members.

On 11 September 1979, Taraki convened the Council of Ministers and attempted to dismiss Amin as Chairman of the Council of Ministers. However, this attempt was not successful as the Amin supporters resisted. Taraki, in another effort to neutralize Amin’s power and influence, proposed to appoint him as an Ambassador in an overseas post. Amin rejected the proposal. The following day Taraki invited Amin to the presidential palace for lunch. Upon his arrival at the palace, Amin was ambushed by gunmen, but he was able to escape unharmed. Shortly afterward, Amin returned to the palace with a contingent of army officers and placed Taraki under arrest. Taraki was subsequently killed.

Following the fall of Taraki from power, Amin was elected Chairman of the Presidium of the Revolutionary Council and General Secretary of the PDPA Central Committee by the PDPA Politburo. Amin’s rise to power was officially endorsed by the Jamiat-ul Ulama on 20 September 1979. Once in power, Amin began to curry favor with the Americans in a desperate effort to broaden his international support. Amin appealed to American officials for support; he even hinted at a possible shift in Afghanistan’s international orientation during a published interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. It is clear that the Americans were not receptive to Amin’s entreaties and never seriously considered an alliance with Afghan communists. Nevertheless, Soviet officials became increasingly fearful that Amin was going to “do a Sadat,” i.e. that he would shift Afghanistan to a pro-American and anti-Soviet stance in the manner of Anwar Sadat during the 1970s. That the United States had rebuffed Amin was unknown to the Soviets.^[32]

The Soviet Invasion and the Start of the War

A) The Invasion

Soviet foreign policy since the Bolshevik Revolution had been dominated by a deep fear of military encirclement. International considerations therefore certainly played a part in the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan. The break with Mao Tse Tung's China, the successive confrontations with China on border questions, and the ideological rivalry with this country had made the USSR realize that it had a formidable and hostile neighbor on its eastern frontiers. The rapidly improving relations between China and the United States in the late 1970s, after President Nixon's visit and the resumption of diplomatic ties stirred up fears of an eventual Beijing-Washington axis directed against the Soviet Union. The Soviets were concerned that Afghanistan would lose its independence and be turned into an imperialist military bridgehead on its southern border. A more immediate cause for concern was the tacit US backing, through its Pakistani and Saudi allies, of the Peshawar-based Afghan Islamist parties. The prospect of an Islamist Afghanistan could have serious repercussions in the contiguous Soviet republics of Central Asia where Muslim revivalist movements were gaining influence.^[33]

Towards the 1970s the Cold War had turned into a worldwide struggle. After the ill-fated Prague Spring of 1968 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Brezhnev promulgated his doctrine that any state that had "turned" socialist would never be permitted to revert to its original form of government or indeed to any other. This doctrine applied particularly to Eastern Europe, which constituted the USSR's security shield in the west, but it could also be extended to countries in other regions where the Soviet Union had come to acquire a dominant influence. The Brezhnev doctrine was to be countered by the Reagan doctrine that no communist de facto conquests should or would go unchallenged. It would insist on combating and rolling back the communist acquisitions and thrusts wherever they occurred.^[34]

Secretary General Leonid Brezhnev, contrary to popular belief, was not eager to intervene in Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko was of the opinion that invasion of Afghanistan had no legal justification in terms of UN Charter as Afghanistan has not been subject to any external aggression. The issue was completely an internal conflict. Gromyko was also thinking that intervention in Afghanistan would have inevitable international implications.

However, the gradual deterioration of Afghan-Soviet relations following the rise of Amin to power created an atmosphere of fear in Moscow that there might be a change in political orientation in Afghanistan. At this point, the Soviet Union had been reduced to only one option: the military rescue of a beleaguered fellow regime, or, as the rest of the world called it, invasion.^[35]

To prevent Amin's defection and restore order to Afghanistan, the Soviets initiated Operation Storm-333 on 27 December 1979 using the provisions of the Soviet-Afghan Treaty of 1978 as their justification. According to Gibbs, the Soviet invasion did not result from a Soviet desire to move against the Persian Gulf. It resulted from a Soviet desire to subjugate the Afghan communist party and to remove Amin and his key supporters. Above all, the invasion reflected a longstanding Soviet fear of having a pro-American regime on its southern frontier.^[36]

On the evening of 27 December, Amin's palace came under attack. Dressed like Afghan soldiers, Spetsnaz commandos broke into the grounds while hundreds of airborne troops assaulted the perimeter. Amin's guards fought back for hours, at the end resisting from room to room inside the palace, but they were ultimately overcome.^[37] Amin was killed in the operation and the Soviets installed Babrak Karmal as the new ruler of Afghanistan.

B) Post-Invasion Period: The Sovietization of Afghanistan

Babrak Karmal announced his own accession to power as the “new phase” of the “Saur Revolution”. He immediately introduced measures to win Muslim hearts, but these measures did not generate the expected results. Before the Soviet invasion traditional fundamentalists were against the attempts of Kabul to modernize the country. After the Soviet intervention, their cause became a “jihad”, a holy war for the liberation of Muslim Afghanistan from the infidel invaders. Some two months after the arrival of the Soviet forces, a nationwide movement called Allah-u-Akbar (“God is Great”) was mobilized against the Karmal regime. Anti-government pamphlets were distributed, terrorist activities multiplied in the towns as well as in rural areas, and Party members and activists were murdered.^[38]

As the Kremlin became more and more aware of the unpopularity and unreliability of the Karmal regime, it adopted a longer-term strategy to achieve its objective of “securing” the future of Afghanistan in line with its “national interests”. This involved the building of a youthful new elite that would loyally run a communist administration and stay committed to a pro-Soviet future for Afghanistan. The school curriculum was changed to include compulsory political science and Russian language courses. New textbooks were prepared under the supervision of Soviet advisers, and teachers were directed to lecture their students regularly on Afghan-Soviet friendship. Soviet influences percolated throughout the whole system. Tens of thousands of young Afghans were sent to study in the Soviet Union to further separate them from their roots. Adults did not escape the program of indoctrination, as may well be imagined in a Soviet-style state where the entire media was state-controlled. The radio, television, press, and cinema provided an unrelieved diet of Marxist propaganda and “socialist realism”, to project an image of the Soviet Union as a workers’ paradise in contrast to Afghanistan’s “feudal” past. Soviet advisers controlled the news programs, and Russian films were screened regularly on television and in the cinemas.^[39]

Another aspect of Sovietization was the introduction into Afghanistan, in a modified form, of the “nationalities policy” that had been implemented in Soviet Central Asia by Stalin. The PDPA had begun to promote the languages and cultures of different ethnic groups through the media, but to restore the credibility of the regime, Karmal himself had to go. He could never live down the opprobrium of having been installed by Soviet tanks. He had been truly reduced to a puppet, increasingly sidelined at every turn by his Soviet advisers who took their cues from the Soviet ambassador.^[40]

C) The Mujahedeen

The Soviet invasion soon provoked a declaration of jihad. On 1 January 1980 the Afghan 15th Division revolted in Kandahar. Anti-Soviet demonstrations started in Kabul and Herat. In the countryside, the Afghan tribes started uniting around a common ideology of the protection of Islam against godless communists. In March 1980, the first clashes started in the mountainous tribal areas in the east of Afghanistan.

Like previous invaders of Afghanistan, the Soviets found the eastern mountains a hornet’s nest of enemy resistance. In midsummer, the Soviets also found their vital highway through the Salang Pass threatened by mujahedeen operating from Panjshir Valley north of Kabul. In the fall they launched two major assaults into the valley but were unable to trap the elusive enemy.^[41]

During 1980 and 1981, the invaders concentrated on securing the essential road network and set up base camps adjacent to airfields, whereas the mujahedeen relied on tactics of raid and ambush. The increasing number of road ambushes started creating difficulties for the Soviet commanders in planning their military operations as well as managing the ordinary land transportation network. The Soviet response to the ambush tactics of the mujahedeen was to

increase the number of helicopters and planes in order to establish an air control. In 1981, the Soviets launched two more offensive into the Panjshir Valley, but soon withdrew because of the tough resistance of mujahedeen commander Ahmed Shah Massoud,^[42] suffering heavy losses.

In the international arena, the President of Pakistan, Zia-Ul-Haq, had been the first leader who demonstrated a firm stance against the Soviet by backing the mujahedeen. In fact, the invasion gave Zia-Ul-Haq an important opportunity. Leading the fight against the infidels and against communism, he now could become a hero both to Islam and the West. The United States, China, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt also stood in the anti-Soviet camp, providing considerable support to the mujahedeen in terms of financial support and arms deliveries.

In September 1981 the United States agreed to a \$3.2 billion economic and military aid package to Pakistan. Zia was thus in a position to serve as Washington's link with the Afghan resistance in a covert operation to "roll back" what President Ronald Reagan called "the evil empire". Between 1981 and 1985, annual US military aid to the mujahedeen channeled through Pakistan grew from \$30 million to \$280 million, making it the biggest single CIA covert operation anywhere in the world.^[43]

Leonid Brezhnev died on 10 November 1982 and was succeeded by the former head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov. Andropov stayed in power for less than a year and a half, dying on 9 February 1984. Konstantin Chernenko succeeded Yuri Andropov, becoming the fifth General Secretary of the Communist Party on 13 February 1984. With Chernenko's rise to power, the worst period of the war for the mujahedeen started. In the spring of that year Chernenko escalated the war by initiating large-scale offensives against mujahedeen strongholds and heavy bombing of villages in an attempt to cut the logistics of the mujahedeen. With the death of Chernenko on 10 March 1985, the war entered a new stage.

D) Withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan

Following the death of Chernenko, Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary by the Politburo on 11 March 1985. Soon after his assumption of power, he gave a last opportunity to the Soviet military to win the war before the year 1986. When the military efforts failed, he agreed to begin negotiations for a peace that would allow the withdrawal of Soviet troops. In a speech to the 27th Congress of the Communist Party, he described the war in Afghanistan as a "bleeding wound".

In April 1986, on the eve of the eighth anniversary of the Saur Revolution, Karmal was called to Moscow. By the end of the month, Najibullah was elected General Secretary of the PDPA's Central Committee. Najibullah was Gorbachev's chosen instrument to carry out his game plan. On 1 January 1987 Najibullah announced his program of "national reconciliation" comprising three key elements: a six-month unilateral ceasefire, the formation of a government of "national unity", and the return of over 5 million refugees from Pakistan and Iran.^[44]

The Geneva Accords were signed on 14 April 1988 by the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and the United States at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva. The Geneva Accords stipulated nine months for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Gorbachev publicly announced that withdrawal would start on 15 May 1988 and be completed within ten months. By mid-February 1989 all Soviet troops had left Afghanistan. The Soviet commander, General Boris Gromov, was the last soldier to leave.

The Impact of the Afghanistan War on the Breakup of the Soviet Union

As seen in the first section of this article, most of the studies aimed at explaining the reasons for the breakup of the Soviet Union usually focus on economic and leadership-based problems,

neglecting the impact of the Afghanistan war. When the Soviets intervened in Afghanistan in December 1979 no one could predict that the Soviet Union could collapse almost within a decade. The war in Afghanistan initially was planned as a small-scale intervention. However, it grew into a decade-long war causing great losses in terms of men, military equipment, and financial resources.

During the early 1980s, the absolute censorship imposed by the Communist Party on the Soviet media prevented the appearance of news on Soviet losses and casualties in Afghanistan. With the escalation of the conflict, the number of Soviet casualties increased and the number of disabled soldiers seen in Soviet cities started to grow substantially. The stories about combat casualties and the problems of disabled soldiers began appearing in the Soviet media and newspapers more frequently despite the censorship. The Soviet leadership chose to deny the existence of the problems of war veterans, namely the *Afgantsy*. This group started to be openly critical of the Soviet leadership. The majority of the *Afgantsy* belonged to the non-Russian nationalities, which increased the criticisms in non-Russian Soviet republics towards the Soviet system.

By late 1986, the Afghanistan war was having significant impacts on Soviet domestic politics. Anti-militarism became strong in the non-Russian Soviet republics. For non-Russians, the war became a unifying symbol of their opposition to Moscow's rule. The decision to withdraw from Afghanistan signaled Soviet military weakness and demonstrated that the army was vulnerable. By 1988, the war had changed the perceptions of Soviet leaders regarding the efficacy of using military force to hold the disintegrating country together. This war also discredited the Soviet army. Since the Soviet army was the glue that held the diverse Soviet Republics together, its defeat in Afghanistan had profound implications for the survivability of the Soviet Union. Corruption, looting, and plundering by Soviet soldiers destroyed the army's moral legitimacy. The ethnic split in the army was accentuated when non-Russian soldiers, particularly those from Asian regions, displayed ambivalence toward fighting Afghans, deserted, and even revolted. Drug abuse was rising and, worse still, soldiers sold equipment to the mujahedeen to obtain drugs, food, and electronic goods.^[45]

Reuveny and Prakash have categorized the war's effects into four types: perception effects, military effects, legitimacy effects, and *glasnost* effects.^[46] This article shares Reuveny and Prakash's categorization in explaining the impact of the war in Afghanistan on the collapse of the Soviet Union.

A) Perception Effects

Soviet leaders, starting with Stalin until Gorbachev, preferred military methods to hold the diverse nationalities together within the Soviet Union. In the past, there had been various examples of the brutal suppression of all sorts of separatist movements, irrespective of the material and human costs. The war in Afghanistan changed this perception. Gorbachev, following the devastating results of the Afghanistan war, was the first Soviet leader that questioned the use of military methods by describing the war as a "bleeding wound" in his speech of February 1986. Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Shevardnadze made similar comments in an attempt to distance himself from the legacy of war. The war in Afghanistan, by demonstrating that Soviet might was not invincible and that resistance was possible, opened the way for non-Russian nationalist and separatist movements. It was not a coincidence that the Lithuanian democratic movement declared its goal of full independence from Moscow only a few weeks after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989.

The war in Afghanistan also provoked ethnic unrest within the Soviet Army, which consisted of soldiers from many nationalities, varying from Central Asia to the Caucasus and from the Baltic republics to Ukraine. When the Soviet army faced heavy losses during the war the commanders started questioning the reliability of Central Asian soldiers, often refraining from sending them to

active combat duties. As the dead, wounded, or disabled war veterans started to return to their hometowns, draft resistance and anti-military demonstrations increased across the non-Russian Republics. In Lithuania, Latvia, and Georgia, for example, a large number of recruits refused to join the Soviet army during the autumn 1989 call-up, staging protests outside army bases. For the first time in the recent history of the Soviet Union, posters appeared during the protests that described the Soviet Union as an “occupier” and the Soviet army as an “occupation force”.

To summarize, the Afghanistan war changed the perceptions of the Soviet leaders about the efficacy of employing troops to suppress non-Russian secessionist movements. It accentuated ethnic strife within the army. As a result, Soviet leaders no longer considered their army to be reliable for suppressing secessionist movements.^[47]

B) Military Effects

In the Soviet Union the security forces, and particularly the army, were key players in domestic politics. Due to its heroic role in World War II the Red Army was a cherished institution. It was a microcosm of the Soviet society, with soldiers from diverse nationalities. The army was viewed as the main defender of communism, a key function in an ideologically charged society. Importantly, it was the glue that held together diverse ethnic groups, primarily because it was perceived as being invincible. The army’s poor performance in Afghanistan was therefore shocking for soldiers, generals, party cadres, and ordinary citizens. Since the military was an important pillar of the anti-*perestroika* camp, the reverses in Afghanistan weakened anti-reformists, hastened *perestroika*, and facilitated the collapse of the system.^[48]

Gorbachev’s attempt to transform the militarized structure of the Soviet Union into a more open civil society soon fueled demands to change the role of the military. The defeat of the Soviet army in Afghanistan and the huge numbers of casualties were no doubt facilitating factors for the emergence of an anti-military campaign, which soon had its repercussions in the March 1989 elections to the Supreme Soviet. In the said elections high-ranking officers failed to get elected while some of their radical opponents found their way into the Supreme Soviet.

In late 1989, the nationals of the Soviet Union witnessed, in surprise, the establishment of a commission composed of deputies whose duty was to investigate the causes and consequences of the Afghanistan war, which meant the questioning of the army by a civilian body. These developments further deteriorated the morale of the war-shattered Soviet army. Leakage of reports about war crimes and corruption in the army to the Soviet media further increased the reactions in the Soviet society. Many *Afgantsy* returned from the war with hopes of finding jobs and getting integrated into society. By the mid-1980s, their number had reached about a million. By the late 1980s, some *Afgantsy* started to gather under non-party organizations that emerged as new social power circles. The *Afgantsy*, in a way, pioneered the emergence of non-party political organizations in the Soviet Union.

To summarize, the consequences of the war in Afghanistan paved the way for the creation of a suitable environment in Soviet public opinion for steps aimed at the demilitarization of the state structure. The atrocities and war crimes committed by Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan led to the questioning of the well-established respectful status of the Red Army as the liberator of the Soviet nation from the Nazis in the Second World War. Finally, the war created a huge mass of *Afgantsy*, who returned home with accounts of cruelty and defeat. They also formed non-party organizations that challenged the legitimacy of the Communist Party.

C) Legitimacy Effects

Following the October Revolution and the collapse of the Russian empire, there was an increase in national movements among different nationalities that lived in the country. The

Bolshevik government based its nationalities policy on the principles of Marxist-Leninist ideology. According to these principles, the new Soviet state would be based on the “friendship of nations”. However, the Soviet government showed reluctance in following these ideals. Only Poland, Finland, and the Baltic countries were able to receive independence after the October Revolution. When Ukraine declared independence in 1918, the response of the Soviet Union was severe. The resulting civil war in Ukraine continued for more than three years and ended with the annexation of Ukraine by Russia. The resistance of the Central Asian nations against the Soviet regime continued until the middle of the 1920s and ended in defeat. The Baltic countries remained independent only until 1940, when the Soviet Army occupied their territory.

The Soviet Union was formally established on 30 December 1922. With the understanding of “internationalism”, the Soviet leadership supported the development of national language and cultures from the 1920s until the second half of the 1930s, when this situation changed. The Soviet leadership then took steps to enhance the role of the Russian nation above other nationalities. During this period many nationalities became the victims of Sovietization. The collectivization of lands and the deportation of rich peasants to Siberia had devastating results in Ukraine, where six to seven million people died of starvation in 1932–1933.

By the beginning of the 1940s, the term “unreliable nationalities” started to appear within official Soviet ideology. The Volga Germans, Chechens, Crimean Tartars, and dozens of smaller nationalities were subjected to mass deportation and collective punishment. The new Soviet national anthem praised the role of the Great Russia^[49] in the creation of the Soviet Union.

The term of Nikita Khrushchev was a period of rehabilitation for the repressed nationalities, but this period did not last long. During Leonid Brezhnev’s leadership all sorts of nationalist tendencies were harshly punished. There were anti-Russian and anti-Soviet sentiments in the Baltic republics, where active nationalists were imprisoned and sent into exile. The Soviet leadership, in an attempt to appease nationalist tendencies and dissatisfaction, made larger investments in the Baltic countries as compared to other national republics. However, the Russians were considered as occupiers in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia.

The war in Afghanistan seriously eroded the legitimacy of the Soviet system. The great loss of prestige of the Soviet army encouraged the nationalist movements, with the Baltic republics assuming a pioneering role. In Central Asia, opposition to Russian rule grew following the Afghanistan war as Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Turkmens were forced to fight against their kinsmen in Afghanistan. Anti-Soviet and anti-war demonstrations were held in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Armenia.

Anti-war protests started in the Baltics as early as 1982 and became more frequent in parallel with the growing number of Soviet casualties. By the late 1980s, the Baltic republics had begun challenging the Soviet Defense Ministry, demanding their draftees to serve within the borders of their home republics rather than being deployed to Afghanistan.

To summarize, the war in Afghanistan war widened the distance between the non-Russian republics and the Soviet state and encouraged separatist nationalist movements. Finally the Baltic countries declared their independence in the last stage of this upheaval.

D) *Glasnost* Effects

The impact of the Afghanistan war was so devastating that war reports challenging the official version could not be suppressed. Importantly, though not surprisingly, the official media also began showing signs of independence in its war reporting, thereby transforming itself from an outlet for official stories to a barometer of public opinion. Contrary to popular perceptions, *glasnost* did not mark the emergence of a relatively free press in the Soviet Union; *glasnost* only accelerated

processes initiated earlier. The war in Afghanistan added new vigor to the forces unleashed by *glasnost*.^[50]

According to Reuveny and Prakash, the transformation of the media in the Soviet Union was realized in four stages. In phase one (1979–1980), the central regime strongly censored the media. Soviet soldiers killed in action were brought home in unmarked coffins. In phase two (from 1981 to mid-1985), the media began publishing accounts of the army being actually involved in fighting. The third phase (mid-1985 to 1989) was heralded by *glasnost*. Beginning in late 1985, reports and letters started appearing in newspapers against the Afghanistan war. The final stage (1989 onwards) of this transformation covers the time period of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. In 1989 and the early 1990s, the press routinely carried interviews in which army generals blamed politicians for engaging in the war in spite of the army's advice to the contrary. In effect, with the Afghanistan war having provided new fuel to *glasnost*, the media began playing an independent role as a watchdog of public interest, a barometer of public opinion, and, most importantly, an arena of contestations among the various organs of the hitherto unified state.^[51]

Conclusion

The disintegration of the Soviet empire started towards the end of the 1980s. With the revolutions of 1989, the former countries of the Iron Curtain left the Soviet bloc, declaring their shift towards multi-party parliamentary democracy. The bi-polar world structure ended with the end of the Cold War in 1989. The dissolution of the Soviet Union was formally enacted on 26 December 1991 with the declaration of the Supreme Soviet acknowledging the independence of the former Soviet republics. On the evening of the same day, the Soviet flag was lowered from the Kremlin for the last time and replaced with the pre-revolutionary Russian flag.

This swift collapse of the Soviet Union was no doubt an unexpected event that had global repercussions announcing the beginning of a new era in world politics. As seen in the first part of this article, the collapse of the Soviet Union was often explained by economic and leadership-based factors. These explanations often neglected the great impact that the war in Afghanistan created. This article argues that the war in Afghanistan played a significant role in the dissolution of the Soviet Union by causing shock waves that adversely affected Soviet society as well as the Soviet state apparatus.

The argument introduced in this article is also well founded in parallel with the theories that lay out the direct role that major wars play in the process of disintegration of empires and great powers. Such wars, often weakening the ruling groups and creating devastating effects in the economies, lead to the collapse of empires. In the beginning, the war in Afghanistan was definitely not considered as a major war, as the Soviet leadership expected a fast victory and the restoration of order in Afghanistan in line with Soviet interests. However, with the strong resistance of the mujahedeen, the war further escalated towards a large-scale conflict, not only costing the lives of thousands of Soviet soldiers but also creating devastating effects for the already inefficient Soviet economy.

Structural problems undoubtedly played an important role in the process of disintegration. However, one could easily ask the question how long the Soviet Union could have continued had it not entered the “quicksand” of Afghanistan. This article lays out the view that the Soviet Union, despite its structural weaknesses, ethnic unrests, and social problems, could have lived on much longer if the war in Afghanistan had not accelerated the process of disintegration. The economic resources that were spent for the continuation of the war were so great that this sum could have

created a boosting effect had it rather been spent for the structural reforms needed in the Soviet economy. An effective transformation in the economy could also have increased productivity and thus could have helped the Soviet leadership meet the increasing material needs of the non-Russian minorities and made them less motivated for nationalist movements. As a result, the system would have relied less on the army and the loss of prestige of the Soviet army due to its poor performance in Afghanistan would have been less disastrous for the stability of the Soviet regime.

Similarly, Gorbachev might have pursued a different path rather than using a method of shock therapy for the Soviet economy and politics if the Soviet Union had not interfered in Afghanistan. However, the war created such devastating consequences for the Soviet economy and society that Gorbachev had made up his mind to introduce radical reforms even before he assumed the leadership. Being a dedicated Communist himself, Gorbachev had no intention of ending the Soviet Union when he initiated the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. However, the “domino effect” caused by the negative legacy of the war in Afghanistan could not be stopped, leading finally to the collapse of the entire system. The Afghanistan war, above all, clearly demonstrated the fact that nationalist demands could no longer be suppressed by using military methods.

^[1]See Erik Lauritzen, *Causes and Origins of the Collapse of the Former Soviet Union*, An Honours Research Thesis, The Ohio State University, June 2011.

^[2]See Kathryn Stoner-Weiss and Michael McFaul, *Domestic and International Influences on the Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Russia’s Initial Transition to Democracy (1993)*. CDDRL Working Papers, Stanford University, Number 108, March 2009.

^[3]Valerie Bunce, *The Soviet Union under Gorbachev: Ending Stalinism and Ending the Cold War*, *International Journal*, 46 (1991), pp.220–241.

^[4]Rafael Reuveny and Aseem Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, *Review of International Studies* (1999), 25, p.694.

^[5]Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492–1992*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p.23.

^[6]Reuveny and Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, p.694.

^[7]Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institution: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p.xi.

^[8]Timothy J. Colton, *Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986, p.49.

^[9]Stoner-Weiss and McFaul, *Domestic and International Influences on the Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Russia’s Initial Transition to Democracy (1993)*, p.5.

^[10]Lauritzen, *Causes and Origins of the Collapse of the Former Soviet Union*, p.17.

[11]Lauritzen, Causes and Origins of the Collapse of the Former Soviet Union, pp.19–20.

[12]Colton, Dilemma of Reform in the Soviet Union, p.51.

[13]Stoner-Weiss and McFaul, Domestic and International Influences on the Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Russia's Initial Transition to Democracy (1993), p.5.

[14]Stoner-Weiss and McFaul, Domestic and International Influences on the Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Russia's Initial Transition to Democracy (1993), p.4.

[15]Moshe Lewin, The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation, Berkeley: UC Press, 1991, p.xx.

[16]Stoner-Weiss and McFaul, Domestic and International Influences on the Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Russia's Initial Transition to Democracy (1993), pp.4–5.

[17]Stoner-Weiss and McFaul, Domestic and International Influences on the Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Russia's Initial Transition to Democracy (1993), p.6.

[18]Tom Ewing, Nationalities in the USSR: Making of the History of 1989, Virginia Tech University Blacksburg, Virginia,

<https://chnm.gmu.edu/1989/exhibits/nationalities/>.

[19]Ewing, Nationalities in the USSR: Making of the History of 1989.

[20]Ewing, Nationalities in the USSR: Making of the History of 1989.

[21]Ewing, Nationalities in the USSR: Making of the History of 1989.

[22]Stoner-Weiss and McFaul, Domestic and International Influences on the Collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and Russia's Initial Transition to Democracy (1993), p.7.

[23]The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) was a Communist party established on 1 January 1965. While a minority, the party helped former Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Mohammed Daoud Khan, to overthrow his cousin, Mohammed Zahir Shah, and establish the Republic of Afghanistan. Daoud would eventually become a strong opponent of the party, firing PDPA politicians from high-ranking jobs in the government. This would lead to uneasy relations with the Soviet Union. In 1978 the PDPA, with help from the Afghan National Army, seized power from Daoud in what is known as the Saur Revolution. Before the civilian government was established, Afghan National Army Air Corps colonel Abdul Qadir Dagarwal was the official ruler of Afghanistan for three days, starting from 27 April 1978. Dagarwal was eventually replaced by Nur Muhammad Taraki. After the Saur Revolution, the PDPA established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, which would last until 1987. After National Reconciliation talks in 1987 the official name of the country reverted to the Republic of Afghanistan, as it was known prior to the PDPA coup of 1978. The republic lasted until 1992 under the leadership of Najibullah and the acting president for the last twelve days, Abdul Rahim Hatef.

[24]Uday Rai Mehra, Why Did the Soviet Union Invade Afghanistan in 1979?, E-International Relations Students, 2014, p.1.

<http://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/09/why-did-the-soviet-union-invade-afghanistan-in-1979/>.

[25]Angelo Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, London, 2002, pp.67–70.

[26]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, pp.70–71.

[27]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, p.71.

[28]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, pp.72–73.

[29]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, p.73.

[30]Mehra, Why Did the Soviet Union Invade Afghanistan in 1979?, p.2.

[31]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, p.73.

[32]David N. Gibbs, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect, International Politics 37:233–246, June 2000, p.236.

[33]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, p.83.

[34]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, pp.83–84.

[35]Stephen Tanner, Afghanistan: A Military History From Alexander the Great to the Fall of Taliban, 2002, p.235

[36]Gibbs, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Retrospect, p.236.

[37]Tanner, Afghanistan: A Military History From Alexander the Great to the Fall of Taliban, pp.235–237.

[38]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, pp.94–95.

[39]Rasanayagam, Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition, pp.96–99.

[40]Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition*, p.91.

[41]Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History From Alexander the Great to the Fall of Taliban*, p.246.

[42]Ahmad Shah Massoud (2 September 1953–9 September 2001) was a powerful military commander during the resistance against the Soviet occupation between 1979 and 1989 and in the following years of civil war. Massoud came from an ethnic Tajik, Sunni Muslim background in the Panjshir valley of northern Afghanistan. After the Soviet occupation of 1979, his role as an insurgent leader earned him the nickname of “Lion of Panjshir” among his followers. In 1992, he was appointed as the minister of defense through the Peshawar Accord, a peace and power-sharing agreement, in the post-communist Islamic State of Afghanistan. His militia fought to defend the capital against militias led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, Abdul Ali Mazari, Abdul Rashid Dostum, and eventually the Taliban. Following the rise of the Taliban in 1996, Massoud, who rejected the Taliban's fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, returned to armed opposition until he eventually fled to Kulob, Tajikistan, destroying the Salang Tunnel on his way north. He became the military and political leader of the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (also known in the West as the Northern Alliance). He was assassinated, probably at the instigation of al-Qaeda, in a suicide bombing on 9 September 2001, just two days before the September 11 attacks in the United States. Massoud was posthumously named a “National Hero” by the order of President Hamid Karzai after the Taliban was ousted from power. The date of Massoud’s death, 9 September, is observed as a national holiday known as “Massoud Day”.

[43]Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition*, p.105.

[44]Rasanayagam, *Afghanistan: A Modern History Monarchy, Despotism or Democracy? The Problems of Governance in the Muslim Tradition*, p.119

[45]Reuveny and Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, p.698.

[46]Reuveny and Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, p.698.

[47]Reuveny and Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, p.700.

[48]Reuveny and Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, p.701.

[49]Союз нерушимый республик свободных (Unbreakable Union of freeborn Republics)
Сплотила навеки Великая Русь. (Great Russia has welded forever to stand.)
Да здравствует созданный волей народов (Created in struggle by will of the people)
Единый, могучий Советский Союз! (United and mighty, our Soviet land!)

[50]Reuveny and Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, p.705.

[51]Reuveny and Prakash, *The Afghanistan War and the Breakdown of the Soviet Union*, pp.705–706.

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